

MEETING SUMMARY

SR 520 BRIDGE REPLACEMENT & HOV PROJECT

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

University of Washington Center for Urban Horticulture, Seattle, WA
July 22, 2003 – 4:00 – 6:00 P.M.

Welcome and Meeting Objectives

Pat Serie, EnviroIssues, opened the meeting by welcoming the Advisory Committee and members of the public. She laid out two primary objectives for the meeting. The first was to bring the committee up to speed on recent developments and information regarding the project, including the passage of the Nickel Gas Tax Package and the selection of options for the environmental evaluation process. The second was to obtain the group's feedback on the most effective format for future community involvement.

Comments/Questions:

- Jean Amick, Laurelhurst Community Club, asked when the project name had changed. *The name changed after the failure of Referendum 51 and the subsequent scaling down of the project.*
- Jean asked if the decision to change the name was made by the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) or the Legislature. *Both were involved in the decision.*
- Jonathan Dubman, Montlake Community Council, asked if the purpose statement of the project had also changed. *The purpose statement has not changed.*
- Paul Demitriades, City of Medina, asked for reassurance that the decision had been made to keep the Advisory Committee in its current form. He also asked if the topic of neighborhood groups would be discussed. *Yes, the Advisory Committee will continue as it is unless the Committee itself decides otherwise.*

Project Update

Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT, introduced a number of organizational changes taking place with the SR 520 Project. Les Rubstello, SR 520 project engineer, will take up a new position within WSDOT as traffic engineer for all projects. Les will be replaced soon, but will remain on the project to help train his successor. The SR 520 project team is grateful for the phenomenal work he has done on the project. His knowledge and expertise have contributed greatly to the project and we would like to thank him for his fine effort. More information will be forthcoming on the status of the position. Another change for the team is the addition of Susie Serres, EnviroIssues, as leader in the community involvement effort. She replaces Pat Serie in this role. Lindsay Yamane is leading the Parametrix team.

Another change will be the location of the project team, which will be moving to the Time Square Building, 414 Olive Way, in downtown Seattle. The new offices are scheduled to be available November 2003, and will house a large number of consultant staff, some city staff and a relatively small number of WSDOT employees. It is our hope that the location of key members of the project team at one site will ease the flow of information among them.

The Nickel Funding Package, approved April 26th by the State Legislature, has allowed for the project to move forward into the environmental impact statement (EIS) phase. The tax, effective as of July 1st, allocates \$53.2 million for EIS, right-of-way (ROW) and design work. An additional \$3.5 million was set-aside for a separate Noise Wall Project that is scheduled to be complete by July 2005.

Furthermore, the Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) was completed earlier this year and includes some changes from its 2002 predecessor.

The funding drought between the failure of R-51 and the passage of the Nickel Gas Tax was a set-back for the SR 520 Project, moving the timeframe for its completion back. Due to funding and the legislature's addition of the 8-lane alternative to the study, the release of the Draft EIS has been pushed back slightly and should be complete by the summer of 2005. The project team will try to accelerate the process as much as possible. Les Rubstello, WSDOT, described the project alternatives. The 4-, 6- and 8-lane alternatives are still the same, but their definitions have evolved slightly. All three alternatives are being considered as possible options. The traffic analysis, which was midway through completion last June, must now be restarted but is on hold until the 6- and 8-lane alternatives become more clearly defined.

The first of these is the 4-lane alternative with a sub option that would include accommodation for future high capacity transit (HCT). The only difference between the two is the \$100 million added cost to include expandable pontoons that could accommodate the future addition of HCT. The expandable pontoons could carry HCT from Medina to the shoreline at MOHAI. Both options would replace the existing bridge and approaches, and would also include widened shoulders and bike lanes.

The second alternative, a descendant of the former 6-lane modified option, is the 6-lane with accommodation for future HCT. It would replace the existing bridge and approaches, creating two general-purpose lanes plus one high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane each direction. The Executive Committee wanted the HOV lanes to go further; this alternative would create a continuous HOV lane from I-5 to I-405. A new analysis will assess the possibility of ending construction at Bellevue Way, with no new work to the east.

The 8-lane with accommodation for future HCT is the third alternative. It would include three general-purpose lanes with an additional HOV lane each direction. This option

requires extensive work at the I-5 and I-405 interchanges to accommodate additional capacity from SR 520.

Les followed the alternatives discussion with an update on the tolling analysis. In March 2002 an initial tolling report that included tolling on I-90 was published. An updated analysis has studied tolling on the 6-lane alternative with no tolls on I-90. The new analysis also includes a consumer survey. The two types of tolling studied were network efficiency and revenue maximization. The former would seek to keep traffic moving at 90% capacity while the latter would vary toll rates in order to extract the largest amount of revenue.

Comments/Questions:

- Peter Hurley, Transportation Choices Coalition, asked if other WSDOT projects would be relocating themselves into a single location. *Yes, several of them will be using the same technique. The I-405 Project headquarters will be in downtown Bellevue and the Alaskan Way Viaduct team will aggregate in another location.*
- Peter asked if there would be resource agency staff at these offices. *Resource agency staff work on several projects at one time so it is not feasible to have them in just one project office. There will be drop-in places and times provided for resource staff, and they will be available at key points in the process.*
- Jean Amick asked if a cost estimate for the 6-lane alternative, like the 8-lane alternative, excluded the complementary costs of remodeling I-5. *Yes, neither the 6- nor 8-lane alternatives include the costs of work on I-5.*
- Virginia Gunby, 1000 Friends of Washington, commented that although scoping for the project was done a couple of years ago, the scoping process remains open throughout the EIS. It is important to get changes on the record during the study process.
- Jean expressed her gratitude for Les's work on the project. She asked how "shores" were defined in the description of the accommodations for HCT. *A modal analysis of the project produced conceptual routes that, once reaching Foster Island, rise above the roadways until passing MOHAI, at which point they drop underground and head downtown.*
- Hans Aschenbach, Roosevelt Neighbors' Association, asked if there was an engineering technique that could ensure the extra capacity on the 4-lane with accommodations for HCT be used exclusively for that purpose. *No. Engineers can design a structure that will be difficult or expensive to convert to general-purpose lanes, but the conversion is always a possibility.*
- Paul Demitriades asked about the location and lid option for the 4-lane alternative. *The 4-lane alternative would utilize existing alignments and would not add lids. The 6- and 8-lane alternatives, however, would add lids.*
- Barbara Culp, Bicycle Alliance of Washington, asked if the HOV lanes would be in the center. *Yes.*
- Barbara asked how this would affect the endpoints of the HOV lanes. *The east end would be seamless, the west is somewhat more difficult due to the lack of*

- HOV lanes on I-5. The termination at the west end would only be clean half of the day – when the reversible lane was in a favorable position.*
- Jean asked about an HOV lane on the exit to the University of Washington. *There was an HOV lane there in the full 6-lane alternative, but it was dropped when the plan was scaled down. However, the Executive Committee has directed us to look at HOV lanes all the way to I-5, so access in the University of Washington area may be included for further analysis. It will come with a price-tag.*
 - Elizabeth Newstrum, Yarrow Point, asked who would be picking up the cost of the I-405/520 Interchange Project. *The project is currently unfunded, making it difficult for us to integrate it into our infrastructural modeling.*
 - Paul voiced his concern regarding the safety of lids in the 6-lane alternative. *Mediocre lids leave nearby school children vulnerable in the event of a truck explosion or other traffic disaster under the lids. Ensuring the safety of our lids is a high priority. In our analysis, we will look at the lids on the SR 520 project to make sure they are safe, and we will consider design components like those included on I-90.. The lids on this project will most likely be without ventilation, but we will look at a number of options in the transportation analysis.*
 - Virginia Gunby inquired about the full meaning of “accommodations for HCT.” *The key to the accommodation for HCT designation is the ability of the accommodating structure to carry the extra weight necessary for a future HCT lane. The specifics of space – location and height – are less important.*
 - Virginia asked if an HCT lane could be built below the road. *This would likely create too much grade change for a train.*
 - Mark Weed, Fisher Properties, Inc., asked about assumptions for SR 522. *SR 522 was just funded by the Nickel Package.*
 - Barbara asked where the bike path would be. *The bike path would be on the north side of the bridge in all cases. In the 4- and 6-lane alternatives it would go to Yarrow Point then drop onto Points Drive East. The 8-lane alternative would probably carry the bike lane further.*
 - Peter Hurley brought up the question of affordability versus performance. *Will the performance analysis compare the 4- and 6-lane alternatives to see where there would be equal performance? The 6-lane will carry more cars than the 4-lane alternative, so a direct performance comparison is unnecessary. This project doesn't have a performance goal related to carrying cars, rather, we're doing an evaluation of environmental impacts.*
 - Peter followed up by asking if person-throughput would be considered among the criteria. *Yes, it can be considered among the measures of effectiveness (MOEs).*
 - Jonathan Dubman commented on the project team's frequent flirtation with the idea of two bridges. *Two bridges is not currently an option.*
 - Hans asked whether costs associated with increased traffic across a 6- or 8-lane bridge would be incurred by the project. *All transportation mitigation costs associated with a new bridge will be covered by this project.*
 - Jonathan asked if network efficiency tolling was equivalent to congestion pricing in its outcome. *Typically congestion pricing charges users for congestion. This model would work to ensure whole network efficiency, therefore taking into account displacement onto other roadways.*

- Jonathan followed by asking about the maximum revenue pricing – would it create a constant free-flow of traffic? *There would be variegated tolls to achieve maximum revenue at all times. A similar situation in Toronto found empirical data contradicting the experimental results of the maximum revenue model. A flat fee achieved higher revenue.*
- Eugene noted the possibility of the Toronto results negating the validity of the tolling analysis for the SR 520 bridge. He asked if the tolling analysis included movement of residents or businesses. *The traffic analysis is being remodeled to account for this. The model takes into account people changing jobs or hours as a response to longer or shorter travel times that result from changes to the traffic network. When the model is rerun, it redistributes trips and some origin and destination locations.*
- Peter asked if the EIS would include tolling analysis. *Yes, the question that remains is the dollar amount of the toll. There needs to be a single dollar value to run the model.*
- Peter asked if the EIS could use high and low values in lieu of a single number. *No, the EIS needs to be an alternative rather than a range of alternatives.*
- Hans asked whether the tolls would be used to manage traffic or pay for the cost of the bridge. *This will continue to be a question in the future, but we are currently regarding the tolls as a means to pay for the costs of construction.*
- Hans voiced his concern about the implications of a temporary toll on post-toll traffic.

Next Steps in Process

Susie Serres, EnviroIssues, spoke about the community involvement process for the next phase of the project. The EIS process will draw out information pertaining to environmental impacts on a myriad of parties. The project team would like to document feedback from these groups throughout the study period. For this purpose, we have outlined a number of platforms for community involvement:

- The Advisory Committee will remain as an umbrella group, focusing on corridor-wide issues.
- Several local “sounding boards” will be created to supplement the Advisory Committee by eliciting more geographically specific feedback. These meetings will be smaller and less formal than the committee meetings – more of a work group size. The sounding boards will be a tool that the project team can use to capture some of the diverse issues that may be missed in a larger group. We would like input from the Advisory Committee on possible locations for the sounding boards.
- Community meetings and workshops are another way to get involved. These events tend to focus on broader community populations, providing a targeted presentation of project findings and fostering a dialogue on impacts.
- Community organization briefings will continue to be part of the project team’s community involvement approach.
- Special events, like the SR 520 Bridge Tour in June, will be scheduled when opportunities present themselves.

- The Project Dialogue Call Center will accept call-in and emailed questions and comments.
- We will also begin working with communities in SR 520 and I-5 areas affected by noise walls. The legislature has provided \$3.5 million in funding for design and construction of noise walls at the I-5/520 interchange.

The Advisory Committee will continue to meet on a roughly quarterly basis.

Comments/Questions:

- Virginia asked how the sounding board meetings would be structured – will there be a presentation or will it just be an open house type of event. *The structure will depend on the nature of the issues, but when we include presentations we will do so at frequent intervals so that everyone has an opportunity to hear the information.*
- Eugene commented that the project already has too many groups. The addition of more informal meetings is unnecessary. The nature of an EIS is formal, the meetings should be the same way.
- Eugene requested that information about I-90 be available at SR 520 meetings and vice-versa. *WSDOT agrees that it is beneficial to coordinate public outreach efforts and will look for opportunities to integrate public outreach among projects that are located in relatively close proximity.*
- Jean commented on the noise levels associated with different types of road cover. She asked if the surfaces would be repaved in the areas with new noise walls. *We are not repaving the surfaces at this time, but a separate project will be repaving stretches of I-5 throughout the city.*
- Hans voiced agreement with Jean's point and asked if a discussion of pavement types would be included in the EIS. *No, the EIS is a federal document with specific guidelines. All pavement in this project will be new, so it is a moot point.*
- Eugene Wasserman asked who would make the final decision following the EIS work. *The Executive Committee will play a large role in the decision but the ultimate choice lies with WSDOT, the Transportation Commission, the Sound Transit Board.*
- Virginia asked what data would be used to project a proper level of tolling down the road. *A full tolling report, including data and economic models, will be released soon.*
- Virginia asked if Sound Transit was still involved in the project. *Yes, they are WSDOT's partner. Eric Chipps, their representative, was not able to attend today's meeting.*

Public Comments/Questions:

- David Allen, City of Seattle, asked if the alternatives with accommodation for HCT would go through a fatal flaw analysis. *The HCT summary report tried to address this, looking at costs, impacts, etc... Hopefully that analysis will cover the same ground as a fatal flaw analysis.*

- David also provided a quick update on the local impact studies, which were required by the legislation. Individual cities are responsible for matching the funds set aside for this process, and most are currently working to make these funds available.

Committee Members

Present	Last	First	Organization
x	Amick	Jean	Laurelhurst Community Club
	Andrews	Deborah	Arboretum Foundation
x	Aschenbach	Hans	Roosevelt Neighbors' Association
x	Culp	Barbara	Bicycle Alliance of WA
x	Demitriades	Paul	City of Medina
	Dent	Bob	Hunts Point
x	Dubman	Jonathan	Montlake Community Council
	Eades	Bertha	Redmond
x	Gunby	Virginia	1000 Friends of Washington
	Hallenbeck	Mark	UW TRAC
x	Hart	Fred	Greater University Chamber of Commerce
	Hill	Jim	Microsoft Corporation
	Hill	Gregory	Streeter Architects
x	Holman	Linda	UnivarUSA
x	Hurley	Peter	Transportation Choices Coalition
	Joneson	Kingsley	Portage Bay/Roanoke Park Community Council
	MacIsaac	Jim	Eastside Transportation Association
	McKinley	Kirk	Pedestrian Advocate
x	Newstrum	Elizabeth	Yarrow Point
	Odell	Nina	Puget Sound Energy
	Ray	Janet	AAA Washington
x	Reckers	Jim	Eastlake Community Council
	Resha	John	Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association
	Sheck	Ronald	Transit Solutions
	Tate	Bob	Clyde Hill
	Tochterman	Thomas	Tochterman Management Group
x	Wasserman	Eugene	Neighborhood Business Council
x	Weed	Mark	Fisher Properties, Inc.
x	White	Rich	Boeing
	White	Ronald	Kirkland Transportation Commission
	Wyble	John	Moxie Media

Public Participants

- David Allen, City of Seattle
- Henry Paulman, TRUST
- Randy Bannecker
- Ted Lane, NOISE

Project Team Members

- Maureen Sullivan, WSDOT-UCO
- Les Rubstello, WSDOT-UCO
- Greg Wornell, WSDOT-UCO
- Susie Serres, EnviroIssues
- Pat Serie, EnviroIssues
- Courtney Caughey, EnviroIssues
- Lindsay Yamane, Parametrix
- Lorie Parker, CH2M Hill